Cinderella
Author(s): Raymond Weeks
Source: *The English Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Apr., 1918), pp. 260-262
Published by: National Council of Teachers of English
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/801227
Accessed: 22/05/2014 02:25

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

*National Council of Teachers of English* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The English Journal.*

http://www.jstor.org

This content downloaded from 195.78.109.120 on Thu, 22 May 2014 02:25:49 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

# CINDERELLA

RAYMOND WEEKS
Columbia University, New York City

Some years ago two old ladies called at my house to sell me a volume said to contain the fairy stories of the nations. The ladies were sisters—sisters in misfortune as they had been sisters in fortune. Their gentle breeding showed in every word and smile. In appearance they resembled the aged sisters in the beautiful painting of Richard Miller which hangs in the museum of the Luxembourg at Paris. The book which they laid before me with such confident tenderness contained fairy stories from England, Germany, Denmark, Russia, Persia, and Spain.

"There appear to be no fairy stories here from France," said I, with an inquiring smile.

"Oh! France has no fairy stories!" replied the elder of the charming sisters.

To gain time, I sought cowardly refuge in an examination of the tales said to come from England. They were "Cinderella," "Red Riding Hood," "Puss in Boots," "Blue Beard," "Sleeping Beauty," "Blue Bird," "Beauty and the Beast."

At last I turned to my visitors: "Listen to me, ladies! I am willing to enrich my library with your volume, provided you agree to write the publishers"—my feelings were beginning to run away with me—"to write the publishers that they are a band of crapulous robbers; that they are covering with shame the countenance of the entire English-speaking race! Tell them that I shall preserve their book as a monument of colossal theft! Why! Not one of their 'English fairy stories' is English! They are all translated from the French, all of them!"

The old ladies looked at me in consternation. I continued: "'Cinderella,' 'Red Riding Hood,' 'Puss in Boots,' 'Blue Beard,' were all first written down by Charles Perrault and his son, and published at Paris in 1697. As for 'Blue Bird,' it is from the pen



This content downloaded from 195.78.109.120 on Thu, 22 May 2014 02:25:49 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

of the French Countess d'Aulnoy, and 'Beauty and the Beast' was written by Madame de Villeneuve. Perrault was an old man of about—of about twice your age, and the two French ladies were as charming as you, which means that they were too charming to be slugged and robbed by these infamous publishers, who have not robbed Perrault and them alone, but an entire nation, for France, the mother of comforting and veracious stories, is not even mentioned in this volume!"

The opinion of the two sisters is not far from being general in this country, with the important modification that many believe our most beloved fairy stories to have come from Germany. This is mainly due to the popularity of the Grimm Brothers' collection, whose influence in the United States received a great impulsion from the German immigrants of 1849 and subsequent years. When the tales of Hans Christian Andersen came to be known here, not a few persons took him to be a German, and such is probably the opinion of the common people, as far as they have any.

This condition of things is all the more remarkable, because the English appear to have recognized from the start that these stories were translated from the French. To take two extremes, we find that Addison knew in 1712 the tales of Perrault (see *Spectator*, p. 303, note), and Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch published in 1910 a book: *The Sleeping Beauty and Other Fairy Tales. From the old French* (the other tales alluded to are "Blue Beard," "Cinderella," "Beauty and the Beast"). Of the scores of English editions of these stories quite a number have indicated that they were from the French. Of course, English scholars have not been slow to recognize English indebtedness to the tripping fairies of France. They knew, for example, that if little Cinderella had not come from across the Channel her name would have been derived from *ashes*, rather than from *cendres*. As long ago as 1879 Ralston suggested that if Cinderella wears glass slippers in the French and English version it can only be because in mediaeval French her slippers were said to be of *vair*, that is lined or topped with costly fur. After the Middle Ages the common people of France no longer understood *vair*, and, as the story was transmitted orally, they heard the word *verre*, glass. In *Perrault's Popular Tales* (Clarendon Press, 1888)

This content downloaded from 195.78.109.120 on Thu, 22 May 2014 02:25:49 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

the editor, Andrew Lang, says of Perrault (page xvi): "No nation owes him so much as we of England, who, south of the Scottish and east of the Welsh marches, have scarce any popular tales of our own save Jack the Giant Killer, and who have given the full fairy citizenship to Perrault's *Petit Poucet* and *Barbe Bleue*." On page xvii he ascribes to the same origin our *Mother Goose's Tales*.

An indication of the completeness with which the Grimm collection—whose versions are frequently much coarser and less beautiful than the French—has blanketed out of sight the version brought to this country by our ancestors is seen in a bright and lively article published in the *English Journal* for 1914, pp. 220–27, by Professor William Hughes Mearns of Philadelphia. His article repays reading, although it lacks the exquisite delicacy of Anatole France, when, as in a well-known passage of *Sylvestre Bonnard*, in *Le Livre de mon Ami, Abeille, Les sept Femmes de Barbe Bleue*, he touches the witchery of the fairy world. How far removed from her French ancestors is our American Cinderella may be seen from the opening four lines of Mr. Mearns's article: "No doubt Cinderella's father felt proper sorrow for the loss of his first wife; especially during the long winter when the lack of a good housekeeper broke uncomfortably into well-adjusted habits. Cinderella, to be sure, was a well-behaved child, and German." In the same paragraph we note "machine-like dexterity of a Teutonic 'mate,'" and "Cinderella's father was a man, a German man." The author is sure that the "cruel stepmother is a German institution, invented by the Grimm Brothers" (p. 221). On the same page our eye catches the words *deutsche Stiefmutter* and the bibulous German annexation of the Latin *Prosit*. On the next page of the writer's witty narration he expresses his conviction that the sisters of Cinderella were named Ortrude and Kundry, not Anna and Gretchen. Farther on, he suspects that when Cinderella went to the ball she was decked with rhinestones.

We owe gratitude to Professor Mearns for an opportunity to measure somewhat the extent of the Grimm invasion. Does there exist a fairy wand powerful enough ever to restore to us the Cinderella of our grandmothers?

This content downloaded from 195.78.109.120 on Thu, 22 May 2014 02:25:49 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions